

mechanisms such as comprehensive or capital improvement plans which will include public participation through scheduled hearings and meetings.

The overall goal of this plan is to reduce the frequency of wildfires spreading from city or private property to public lands and from spreading from public lands to municipal property. Fire fighter safely will always come first. This goal will be achieved by reducing fuels in high risk areas and conducting public education and the training programs throughout the county.

3.0 GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF ASSESSMENT AREA

Gooding County was established January 28, 1913 with its county seat at Gooding. It encompasses 733 square miles. The topography of the county is relatively flat with some rolling hills. Gooding County is predominately made up of rural and agricultural areas with a few smaller urban developments. The cities of Gooding, Bliss, Hagerman and Wendell have experienced growth and development. The majority of the development has occurred along the major highways and the two Union Pacific rail lines that travel through the county. Most of the industries within the county are related to agriculture products, their production, harvest or shipping.

Landownership

Gooding County contains approximately 469,997 acres divided among four landowners (Table 1). Figure 1 shows Gooding County land ownership and the four fire districts. State and federal lands located north are covered by mutual aid agreements including BLM and both Camas and Gooding fire districts. Figures 5, 7, 9 and 13 show individual fire districts.

Table 1. Land Status of Gooding County, Idaho

Owner	Acres	Percent
BLM	252,461	54
USFWS	84	>1
Water	2,427	>1
Private	195,347	42
State	19,678	4
TOTAL	469,997	100

Population and Demographics

There are 14,155 people, 5,046 occupied households, and 3,719 families in Gooding County (2000 Census). Nearly half or 6,652 persons reside in one of the major cities (Table 2), while the other half resides in rural areas comprised of farmers, ranchers and persons desiring a rural lifestyle. The population density is 19.3 persons per square mile. The city of Gooding is the county seat and also contains the largest number of persons.

Table 2. Populations of major cities in Gooding County, Idaho

Major Cities – Gooding County, Idaho	2000 Population Census
Non-City	7,503
Gooding	3,384
Bliss	276
Hagerman	656
Wendell	2,336
Total	14,155

Topography and Vegetation

Gooding County is located in the Snake River Plain of South Central Idaho. The topography is generally flat with some rolling hills. The majority of the private land (Table 1) has been developed for agricultural use where seed crops such as alfalfa hay, potatoes, beets, and grains are produced. The public lands are primarily used for grazing and are undeveloped. The elevation of the community ranges from 2,900 to 5,025 feet. The northern extents of the county contain an area known as the City of Rocks, which is named for its geologic formations. The undeveloped public lands in Gooding County are dominated by sagebrush steppe and grassland habitats. Some of the more common plant species that occur in these habitats include: Wyoming big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp. *wyomingensis*), basin big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp. *tridentata*), mountain big sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata* spp. *vaseyana*), low sagebrush (*Artemisia arbuscula*), green rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus viscidiflorus*), bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Idaho fescue (*Festuca idahoensis*), Sandberg bluegrass (*Poa secunda*), Thurber needlegrass (*Achnatherum thurberianum*), and arrowleaf balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*).

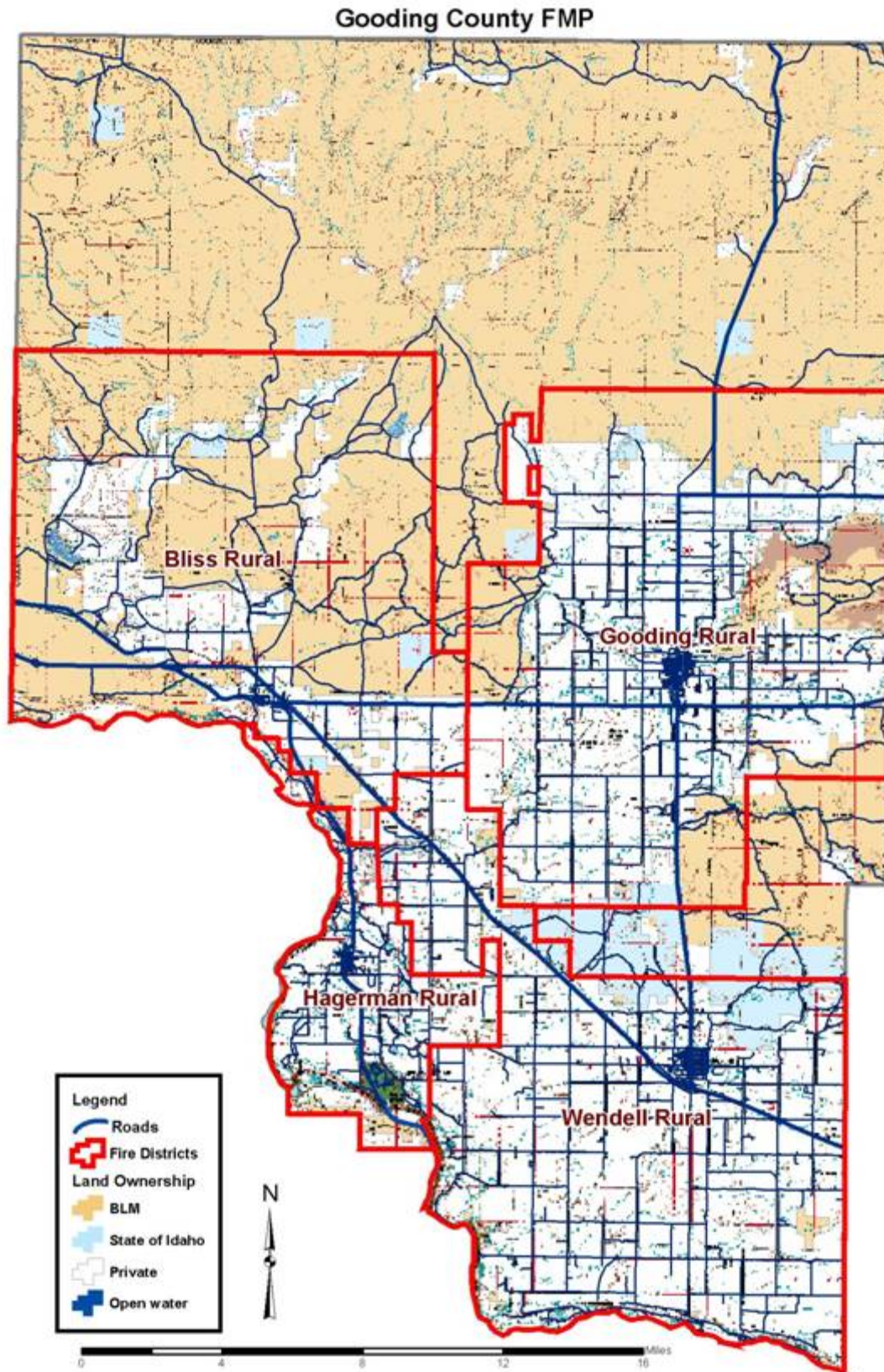


Figure 1. Gooding County land ownership, county roads, and Fire Districts.

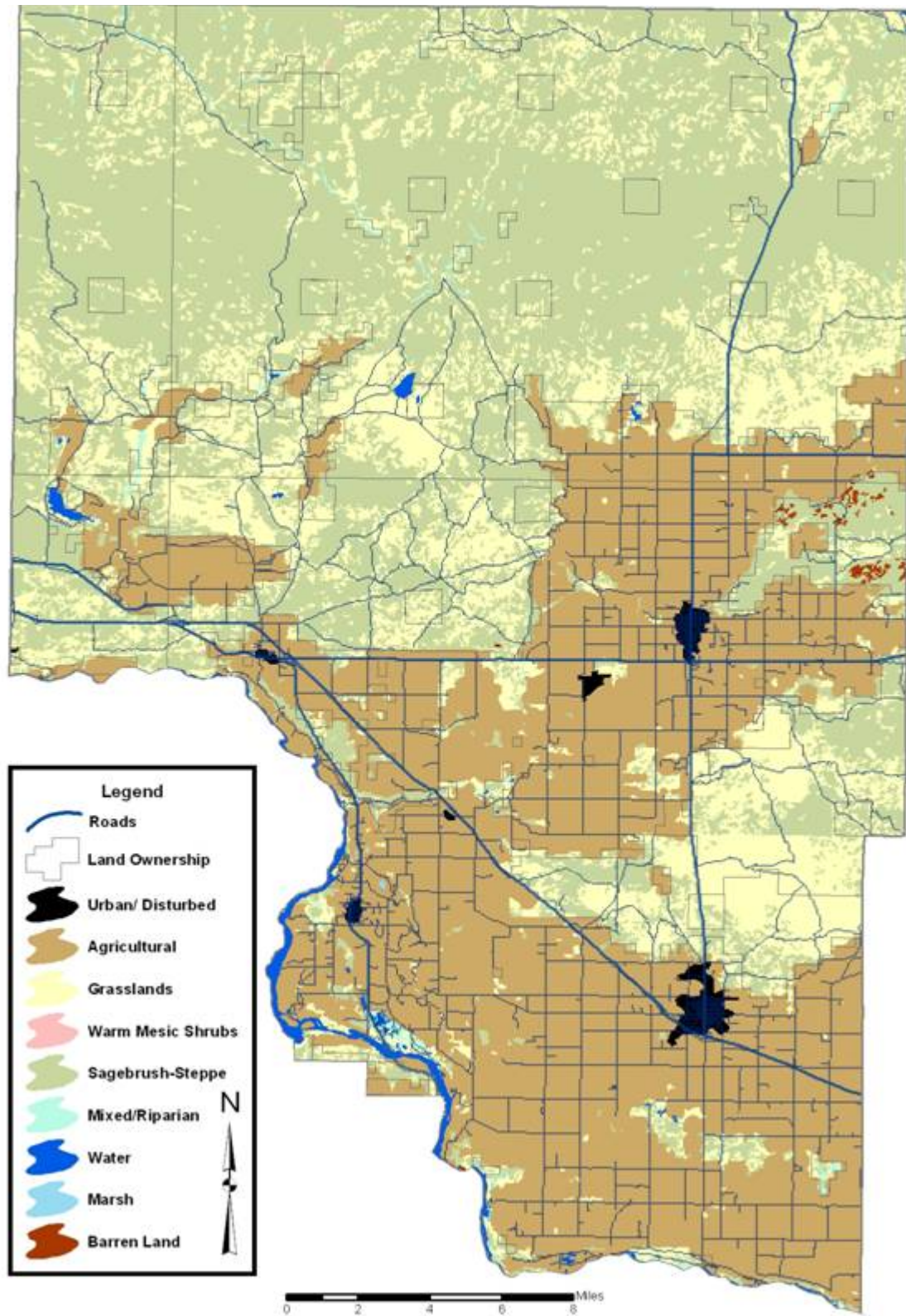


Figure 2. Gooding County vegetation map.

Climate

Climate in Gooding County is generally consistent with other counties located along the Snake River Plain. In winter the average daily maximum temperatures is 40 degrees Fahrenheit (F) and the average daily minimum is 21 degrees F. In summer the average daily maximum temperature is 86 degrees F and the average minimum temperature is 50 degrees F. In general the summer days are hot and the nights are fairly cool. Precipitation during the summer months is limited to isolated showers and thunderstorms that produce localized precipitation. Months of July through October represent the lowest average total precipitation recorded and coincide with the peak fire season when summer storms likely occur. Winter conditions usually arrive in mid-November. Snowfall is the primary source of precipitation for the county. Snow levels in the county vary between communities due to elevation.

Tables 3 and 5 summarize long-term climatic data for Gooding, Bliss, and Hagerman, ID. Data from these weather stations provide a good cross-section of the lower portions of Gooding County's weather patterns.

Table 3. Monthly Climate Summary for Gooding, Idaho for years 1948 to 1997

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	33.9	41.0	50.3	62.1	70.8	79.9	89.9	88.2	79.0	65.7	48.1	37.6	62.2
Average Min. Temperature (F)	18.4	22.1	27.9	35.1	42.1	49.2	56.2	54.0	46.3	36.9	26.5	21.4	36.4
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.45	0.84	0.91	0.61	1.00	0.70	0.18	0.23	0.50	0.51	0.99	1.44	9.36
Average Total Snowfall (in.)	10.2	5.0	1.7	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.1	6.9	26.2
Average Snow Depth (in.)	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1

Table 4. Monthly Climate Summary for Bliss, Idaho for years 1931 to 2000

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	36.7	43.3	53.2	64.5	73.8	82.2	92.2	90.6	80.4	67.6	49.8	39.3	64.5
Average Min. Temperature (F)	19.2	23.2	28.2	34.3	41.6	48.7	54.6	52.1	43.8	35.0	26.9	21.4	35.7
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.33	0.97	0.92	0.74	0.85	0.72	0.22	0.23	0.42	0.60	1.28	1.18	9.45
Average Total Snowfall (in.)	7.2	4.0	1.4	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	2.8	4.7	20.5
Average Snow Depth (in.)	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

Table 5. Monthly Climate Summary for Hagerman, Idaho for years 1982 to 2003

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Average Max. Temperature (F)	41.6	48.7	58.3	66.7	76.3	85.1	93.6	92.8	82.8	70.5	52.3	40.1	67.4
Average Min. Temperature (F)	21.6	24.1	30.7	35.7	43.4	49.9	54.3	51.7	42.8	33.7	26.7	19.7	36.2
Average Total Precipitation (in.)	1.21	1.12	1.10	0.73	0.96	0.70	0.23	0.34	0.42	0.62	1.34	1.42	10.21
Average Total Snowfall (in.)	2.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.5	4.4
Average Snow Depth (in.)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0